

## **God's Leaders: Qualifications for Elders**

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### **Course description: Part 5**

This course explores an introduction into God's plan for the leaders of the church and a discussion of qualifications given Titus. This course will fall into three sections. First, the context behind the qualifications given in the book of Titus will be discussed. Second, there will be a discussion of the qualifications given (vv. 6-9). Third, there will be a discussion on the reasons and importance for these qualifications (vv. 10-16).

### **Course Objectives: By the end of this class students will have:**

- A. An understanding the biblical basis for the eldership, especially in the context of the book of Titus.
- B. An understanding of importance of establishing elders "in every city."
- C. Knowledge of the various qualifications listed.

### **Outline of the class:**

- A. Review the Context Behind the Qualifications
  - 1. There is a crucial need to establish quality leadership on the island.
  - 2. Review the relationship of 1:10-16, and common to the Epistles to Timothy, is the problem with false teachers (3:9-11).
  - 3. Review **1:5** as a key verse and why
  - 4. Paul begins by saying for this reason Titus was left in Crete. What were the primary tasks set before Titus in going to Crete?
  - 5. The word "appoint" (καταστήσεις).
- B. The Qualifications Given
  - 1. General Breakdown:

## **GOD'S OVERSEERS**

### **Divine Expectations for Leaders**

#### **(Titus 1:6-9)**

Intro: The environment on Crete was not unlike that throughout the world.

Good leaders are needed; men who will meet God's qualifications for those who will lead His church.

The list Paul gives Titus falls into four categories:

### 1. Personal Expectations

- A. Above reproach
- B. Not self-willed
- C. Not quick tempered
- D. Not addicted to wine
- E. Not fond of sordid gain
- F. Loves what is good
- G. Sensible
- H. Just
- I. Devout
- J. Self-controlled

### 2. Domestic Expectations

- A. Husband of one wife
- B. Children who believe
  - 1) Not accused of dissipation
  - 2) Not accused of rebellion

### 3. Relational Expectations

- A. Not pugnacious
- B. Hospitable

### 4. Intellectual Expectations

- A. Holds fast the faithful word
- B. Able to exhort in sound doctrine
- C. Able to refute those who contradict

## 2. "Above Reproach"

- i. Paul begins by saying that the elder must be **above reproach** (ανέγκλητος). This word means the man is free from charges of wrongdoing or indiscretions. He has a noble and honorable reputation
- ii. This view is substantiated by the Greek, which has the verb "to be" (ενοι) after this first qualification. This word carried the force of one who rises above criticism, not that he is without sin (which the translation "blameless" might imply).

## 3. "Husband of One Wife"

- i. Same phrase as in 1 Timothy 3:2 (μεις γυναικος ενήρ). It is not meant to be a check list merely stating that the man is married. There is a different word for that.
- ii. Rather, Paul uses a phrase that indicates that the man is totally dedicated and committed to his wife.
- iii. Like in 1 Timothy, Paul is making a moral point not a practical one.
- iv. His focus, attention, devotion is on one woman (his wife); he is not a womanizer (flirt).

4. “Having Children Who Believe”

- i. This phrase can be understood in two ways: (1) the children must be Christians, or (2) the children must be trustworthy and dependable. The second seems to be preferred because of the following reasons: (a) It is the logical meaning of **believe** (πιστά) in this context, since Paul continues to explain what is meant by this word: **not accused of dissipation or rebellion**. This phrase is referring to the children (not the elder), and therefore explains that the children are *faithful to their father*; (b) It fits logically with the parallel context of 1 Timothy 3:4 (“Keeping his children under control with all dignity”).
- ii. Therefore, the word πιστά means “obedient” here (cf. Knight 289; Mounce 388).
- iii. Does this mean that the elder doesn’t have to have Christian children? No. When considering the context of 1 Timothy 3, it is obvious that Paul is making the point that the man must prove his ability to lead his children *to godliness*. If he is unable to do this, why would we suppose that he could do it with the church of God? (1 Tim. 3:5)

5. “Not self-willed”

- i. This is the first of a list of five that are preceded with the word “not.” As “God’s steward,” he has to be responsible in these areas.
- ii. An elder does not insist on having his own way every time. He cannot be stubborn or arrogant.

6. “Not quick-tempered”

- i. Knowing the type of hot-headed, quick tempered individuals that lived on Crete, this qualification makes perfect sense. Since an elder is going to be working with those who are quick tempered, he has to be able to control himself.
- ii. Doesn’t have a ‘short-fuse,’ where the smallest thing creates anger. Church work has plenty of conflicts. An elder needs to be one that keeps his emotions in check.

7. “Not addicted to wine”

- i. Basic definition would mean “not guilty of drunkenness.”
- ii. The wine produced on Crete was famous all over the world, and they surely had ready access to it.

- iii. The elder must be one who does not have an inclination toward alcoholic beverages. Anything that would dull his ability to think and reason easily and clearly must be avoided. If the elders have problems with wine, then what kind of example are they setting for the flock?

8. “Not Pugnacious”

- i. The elder must not be violent. He must not be a fighter or a bully.
- ii. While this might seem like an odd qualification, one must remember that the Cretans were a violent people. Besides, it is well documented that when people are in a position of power they can quickly let that power go to their head and begin “strong-arming” people around. The elder must have a gentle spirit, and he needs to be one who gets along easily with people.

9. “Not Fond of Sordid Gain.”

- i. Sordid means “dishonest.” In I Tim. 3:3, Paul said the elder must not have the “love of money,” while here on Crete, an elder is not to be fond of dishonest gain - a different concept. In Ephesus, Paul is concerned that the elder's time be consumed by his pursuit of monetary gain (even though he is earning it legally). In Crete he is not to make money by dishonest means or getting money anyway he can.
- ii. Certainly, an elder should not be a swindler or a gambler. He earns his income through honesty and hard work. This sets the kind of example these young Christians need to see.

10. “Hospitable”

- i. I Tim. 3:2 - They love strangers and receive them in. One would not want to stay in the hotels in Crete with all of the evil and corruption predominating life on the island.
- ii. Elders needed to set the example by opening their homes to those who needed a place to stay.

11. “Loving What Is Good”

- i. This is one word in the Greek. It is not found elsewhere in the NT. Contrast this with 2 Tim. 3:3, where the evil men were “lovers of money.”
- ii. An elder must be someone who loves what is good: good conversation, activities, music, literature, people, etc. In contrast, the Cretans loved that which is not good. They loved the things of the world.

12. “Sensible”

- i. This is the first occurrence of this key word in Titus (Cf. 2:2, 4, 5, 6, 12).

- ii. This word means one who is prudent, thoughtful, and self-controlled. The best way to define this is "a person who thinks before he acts."
- iii. The man who is sensible is one who is not impulsive and does not fly off the handle. He thinks about things and mulls them over in his mind before he acts.

### 13. "Just"

- i. "Upright and honest" - He gives every man his due. He accepts and administers accepted standards of morality and justice. He conforms to the law of man and the law of God.
- ii. Cornelius is called this in Acts 10:22.

### 14. "Devout"

- i. He is holy and pious. The best definition is that he is one who is sincerely religious and is devoted in his service to God.
- ii. In both of Paul's letters to Timothy, he mentions people who fake godliness. In 1 Tim. 4:7 Paul mentions those who suppose godliness to be a means of gain. In 2 Tim. 3:5 there are those who are holding to a form of godliness but have denied its power.
- iii. Thus, in view of these types of individuals, the elder has to be a man who is genuinely devout. He is truly holy. He does not fake religion.

### 15. "Self-Controlled"

- i. He is disciplined, having his faculties under control. He is self-mastered (cf. 1 Cor. 7:9; 9:25; Gal. 5:23). Again, this would go along with the thoughts above under "pugnacious." The elder must be one who truly has his life, emotions and desires under control.
- ii. He needs to be the example as to how one should control his lusts (Jas 1:13-14) and to take the way of escape with each temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).

### 16. "Holding Fast the Faithful Word."

- i. He possesses the faithful word to begin with and then he holds it fast. He will not be pulled away from it easily. He has a firm grip on the truth. He is convicted of it and clings to it. He has the attitude of "buy truth and do not sell it." He will not let it go for any price.
- ii. There will be many hardships that face the elder of the Lord's church. He has to have a good grip on his own faith and the Word of God in order to meet and defeat these hardships. If he is plagued by doubts or questions he will not be a good elder. His doubts will spread to others and create an atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty.

- iii. "...which is in accordance with the teaching" - This expands the above statement. It is in accordance to the "teaching," which is what Paul has been preaching (cf. 2 Tim. 1:13) as well as the other apostles.
- iv. If the elder does not believe, practice and teach what is the "sound doctrine" then he is not qualified to lead God's church (which is the pillar and support of the truth - 1 Tim. 3:15).

#### 17. "Able to Exhort in Sound Doctrine"

- i. These last two qualifications especially reveal the need for good leaders on Crete. Since Cretans have a typical disregard for other's beliefs and religions, it is very important for the elder to be able to encourage others to obey the Gospel.
- ii. Again, it is clear that the elder has to know the Scriptures to be able to do this in the first place. The word for sound is the same word that occurred in 1 Tim. 6:2, 3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3 and also will occur again in Titus 1:13 and 2:1.

#### 18. "Able to Refute those Who Contradict"

- i. Simply stated, he must deal with those who cause trouble. In 3:11, Titus is told not to spend much time with those people. Therefore, it must be Paul's desire that the elders deal with them. This is also wise advice for today's churches. Oftentimes the evangelist is given the responsibility of dealing with troublemakers (especially those who are offering differences in opinion in doctrine).
- ii. The elders, however, who know the Scriptures, need to take care of the problem. The evangelist has other responsibilities.

#### C. Questions for further consideration:

1. Why do you think elders need to have these qualifications?
2. While all the qualifications are essential, which ones would you consider especially important for the small villages on the island?
3. What, if any, is significant about the differences between the list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1?

#### Conclusion:

- A. These last two qualifications are, in the opinion of this writer, those that are most lacking in elders today. Many are not able to boldly defend the truth and many are not able to show the false teacher how he has erred. The Lord requires His elders to be ones who can refute false teachers and exhort in sound doctrine. If one cannot do this, then he must not serve, even if he meets all the other qualifications.

- B. We must remember that good men do not equal qualified leaders. God has these qualifications for a reason.
- C. It is frequently observed that the church as a whole lacks leaders. In addition, those who do have leaders sometimes have those who are not qualified to lead. It is not possible to be the church of Christ without having good, sound, qualified leaders. In order for this to happen, these texts need to be taught and emphasized. Equally, our younger men need to be encouraged to strive to be elders someday. That “seed thought” might be all it takes to set him on the course to be a good leader someday.